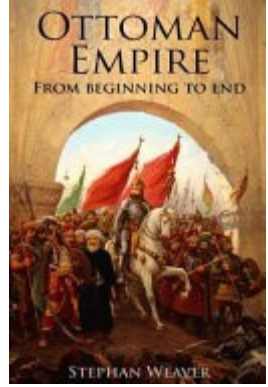
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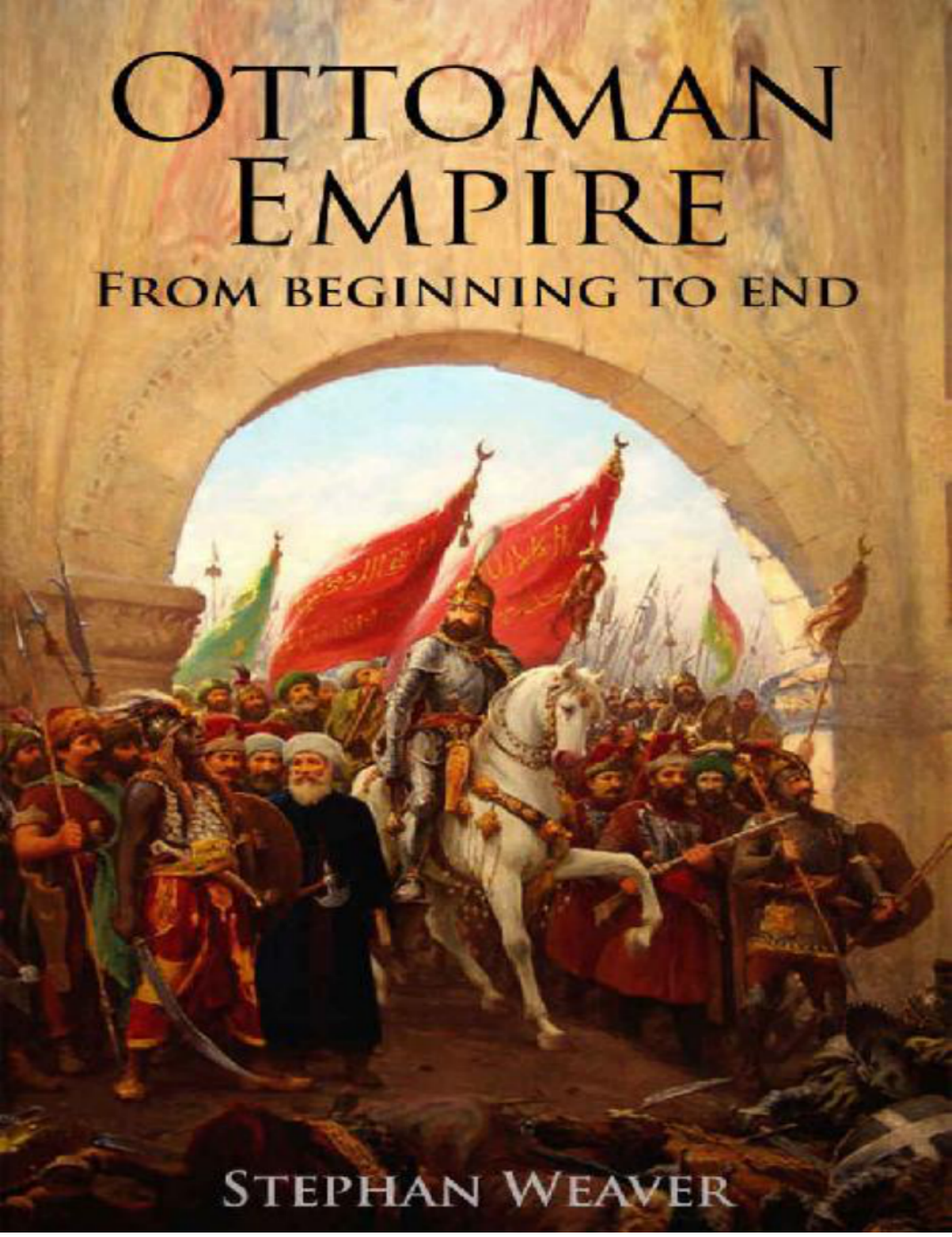

STEPHAN WEAVER

THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

From Beginning to End

BY
Stephan Weaver

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PREFACE

The modern Turkish state is one of the premiere powers in the Middle East. She possesses a formidable army and has important relationships and alliances with western and European powers through her membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). However, many in the west are totally unaware that Turkey, in the very recent past, was the homeland to one of the most enigmatic and powerful empires in history: the Ottoman Empire. The images that are evoked when one speaks of the Ottomans in the west is without fail Muslims in prayer, harems of exotic women, eunuch guards, lavish palaces and colourful fashions. All these things, without doubt, were indeed part and parcel of the Ottoman society and their royal court. Conversely, this is an extremely narrow view. Here we will dive into their world, their history, and their society. We do this to better understand the world's last great old world empire. The rise and fall of the Ottoman juggernaut informs and influences the Middle East to this day.

Many Turkic tribes arrived from the central Asian steppe, heading west into Anatolia and Persia during and following the Seljuk Turk invasions of the 10th century. Most settled down in what is today Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran. In particular, the Turkic peoples originated from the modern day "Stan" nations. Today the Turk ancestral homes are known by names like Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan as well as southern Siberia and Mongolia. Turkic tribes were frequently employed as mercenaries by Muslim Emirs and Caliphs to fight off invaders and put down rebellions. The vast majority Turkic tribes, by this time, had already been converted to either Islam or Christianity for generations. They were the two most dominant faiths in the region; it only made good sense to adopt the faiths of one's powerful neighbours. They were highly sought after for their military ability and cavalry warfare skill set. In Egypt for instance, Mamluk Turk slave troops were able to deliver the invincible Mongol horde their first solid defeat and prevented the Mongols from ever conquering Egypt. The Mamluk Turks later went on to emancipate their lot by force. The Egyptians should not have kept a highly trained, ruthless army of slave troops; it was never going to end well. The Mamluk would go on to attain posts of high political office within the Egyptian Caliphate's government. A Mamluk warrior even rose to the post of Pasha, or Prime Minister. On the other hand, blow back of this Muslim-sponsored military migration permitted the Turks

to evolve from a nomadic, tribal way of life on the central Asian steppe into a more settled society in the heart of the Middle East. This settlement allowed them to proliferate across the region and eventually control millions of square miles of territory across three continents.

The Ottoman state was a vast dominion. At her height of power in the 1500's, the Ottoman Empire stretched from Iran, across North Africa, encompassing the deserts of the Middle East and reached into the very heart of Southern Europe in the Balkans, not to mention eventual control the Mediterranean as the Romans once had. The Mediterranean was ostensibly a Turkish lake. At its core, it was an empire based on the Islamic faith, military prowess, and economic expansion. With religious policy for the time that bordered on "liberal," the Ottomans allowed religious freedom to a degree not often seen in the Muslim world and almost never encountered in a Christian nation of the period. They made sure to keep their non-Turkish, non-Muslim subjects invested in the empire's prosperity and growth. This gave all subjects a sense of investment in what happened to the empire.

Moreover, it elicited loyalty from all Ottoman citizens, regardless of ethnic or religious heritage; Christians, Arabs, Persians, Slavs, Jews, Shia Muslims, Druze, and many others who lived under the Ottoman banner were allowed to exercise their religious freedoms and maintain their ethnic identity so long as their allegiance to the Ottoman state was not in question.

The Ottomans utilized a unique form of military slavery with their Janissary army corps. With this slave army they conquered nearly all their neighbours. The Byzantines, Arabs, Egyptians, Jews, Kurds, Armenians, the Tatars, and a litany of other regional societies all fell under the sway of the Sultan. They created a complex bureaucratic and legal system which set the standard for dozens of modern nations. Many elements of the Ottoman legal code have been adopted by countries the world over. In addition, they managed not only expel the Mongols from the region; they were able to unite Sunni Muslims under their banner, despite not being Arabs.

The Sultans saw it as their religious duty to expand the empire and conquer as much territory as possible to bring it all under their "wise and benevolent" rule. In reality, Islam became more of a selling point to garner support from their Arab and other Turkic subjects who were majority Sunni Muslims. While they did spread Sunni Islam through conquest, in truth the expansion was one of attaining economic and

political dominance. The Ottoman Turk Sultans were the self-appointed defenders (Ghazi) of the Sunni Islamic sect, to which most Muslims still belong. The Ottoman Turks themselves however practiced a sub-sect of Sunni Islam known as Sufi. Sufism is common among the nomadic horse centred cultures, as it does not require a Mosque for worship and puts one closer to nature when at prayer or sermon. In short order, Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem were all under the control of the Ottomans. They exercised political, military and economic hegemony over the holiest sites of the three Abrahamic faiths. The Ottomans even went so far as to finance the Protestant reformation in Europe in the 1500s. The Ottoman's saw Martin Luther's revolt against the Pope as an opportunity to influence European politics while simultaneously delivering a blow to their age old foe, the Catholic Church.

The Ottoman Empire is among the longest reigning in history, lasting from around 1350 until 1922. As general trend, most empires have about a 300 year life span. The imperial governments that tend to be the most successful exhibit many of the same policies as the Ottomans, among those being religious tolerance, adoption of foreign ideas and technologies, currency, military might, and inclusion of subjects into the affairs and prospering of the state, all of which are keys to a sustainable empire. The Macedonian Greeks, Persians, Romans, British, and Americans have all used this model with varying degrees of "liberty" assigned to their people. The Ottoman Turks also comprehended the wisdom of "liberal" social policies. This is not to whitewash Ottoman military endeavours and the use of what amounts to "slave special forces," but it should be pointed out that they had a great deal of tolerance and inclusion of those who were not Turks. Often those that rose to power as the Grand Vizier, which was the Sultan's chief advisor and served a Prime Minister's role, were not born Muslims. Moreover, almost none were even Turks. The Vizier was usually drafted from among the Janissary corps, who themselves originated from Christian families in Serbia, Greece, and Bulgaria.

As in all empires, there were periods of unrest, instability, expansion, and contraction. The Ottoman expansion was met with resistance and rivalry. Incompetent Sultans, dynastic family conflicts, the Hapsburgs, the Russians, their own Janissary corps, government Ministers, and later an Arab rebellion during World War One all contributed to the Ottoman's final collapse into the dustbin of history. The fall of the Ottoman Empire following Mustafa Kamal's coup d'état after World War One led to an earth shaking paradigm shift. The aftershocks of the Ottoman collapse are felt even today. All of this will be explored here in a concise manner, as to do otherwise would take volumes to

delineate the many specific people, dates, and events. Instead, here we endeavour to inform the layman and the inquisitive on the famous, infamous, and truly important people, dates, and events that occurred during Ottoman rule. If this brief overview inspires you to research deeper into the 600 year rabbit hole of the Ottomans, our job is well done. If not, even with a basic comprehension of the Ottomans that we will provide, one can better grasp the modern day Middle East and the conflicts which rage there to this day.

Chapter One

List of Ottoman Sultans

Here you will find a list of all the Sultans who ruled the Ottoman Empire. Included are some brief annotations of events of special interest during a Sultan's rule which were pivotal. Not all Sultans listed will be expounded upon in the list; however those individuals whose rule was marked by civil war, forced ouster, or a unique ascension to the throne are noted in brief.

Foundation Period

1.) Osman I (Othman Bey) Ruled: 1281-1326

- Elected chief of the Kayi Turk tribe upon his father Ertugrul's death.

- Invested as an Amir (prince) by the Seljuk Turk Sultan.

- Declared his tribe a sovereign state upon the collapse of the Iconium Sultanate of the Anatolian Seljuk Turks on 27, July, 1299.

2.) OrhanRuled: 1326-1362

3.) Murad IRuled: 1362-1389

4.) Bayezid IRuled: 1389-1402

Dynastic Civil War Era

5.) Isa CelebiRuled: 1403-1405

-Isa defeats Musa Celebi at the battle of Ankara. July, 1402

-controls western Anatolia and Armenia for 2 years.

-defeated by Mehmed Celebi at Ulubat in 1405.

-later murdered in 1406

6.) Suleiman CelebiRuled: 1402-1411

-Named Sultan of Rumelia, the European region of the empire following the battle of Ankara.

- assassinated on 17, February, 1411.

7.) Musa CelebiRuled: 1411-1413

-named Sultan of Rumelia after Suleiman's death.

-killed in battle on 5, July 1433 by the forces of Mehmed Celebi in Bulgaria at Camurlu Derbent.

8.) Mehmed Celebi (Mehmed I) Ruled: 1403-1406 & 1413-1421

-seized control of eastern Anatolia as the Co-Sultan just after the defeat in the Battle of Ankara on 20 July 1402.

-defeated Isa Celebi in the battle of Ulubat in 1405.

-made ruler of the Anatolian territory of the Ottoman Empire upon İsa's death in 1406.

-acquired the title of Ottoman Sultan Mehmed I Khan (ruler) upon Musa's death on 5 July 1413.

Expansion Period

9.) Murad IIRuled: 1421-1444

-stepped down from power for his son Mehmed II to take the post of Sultan

10.) Mehmed IIRuled: 1444-1446

-abdicated the Sultanate in favour of his father after having asked him to return to power.

11.) Murad IIRuled: 1446-1451

-his 2nd reign as Sultan.

-asked to take the throne following an attempted coup d'état by the Janissary Officer Corps against his son.

12.) Mehmed IIRuled: 1451-1481

-his 2nd reign as Sultan, made Sultan once again following his father's death.

-crushed what remained of the Byzantine Empire.

-conquered the fortress city of Constantinople in 1453.

-renamed Constantinople to Istanbul, made it the Ottoman imperial capital.

13.) Bayezid IIRuled: 1481-1512

14.) Selim IRuled: 1512-1520

15.) Suleiman "The Magnificent"Ruled: 1520-1566

16.) Selim IIRuled: 1566-1574

17.) Murad IIIRuled: 1574-1595

18.) Mehmed IIIRuled: 1595-1603

19.) Ahmed IRuled: 1603-1617

20.) Mustafa I "The Deranged"Ruled: 1617-1618

-deposed by the Council of Ministers. Due to mental illness, his nephew Osman II was chosen to succeed him.

21.) Osman IIRuled: 1618-1622

-deposed in a Janissary coup.

-put to death on the orders of his Grand Vizier/Pasha on 20, May 1622.

22.) Mustafa IRuled: 1622-1623

-reinstalled as sultan following Osman II's deposition and murder.

-was merely a figure head under the Grand Vizier's government rule.

-ousted once again, lived in confinement until his death on 20, January 1623.

23.) Murad IVRuled: 1623-1640

-conqueror of Baghdad.

24.) IbrahimRuled: 1640-1648

-conqueror of Crete.

-deposed by his Arab Minster of War, Sheikh Ul-Islam.

-assassinated on the orders of his Grand Vizier, Pasha Mehmed.

25.) Mehmed IVRuled: 1648-1687

-ousted following the Ottoman's second defeat by a Hungarian led coalition at the battle of Mohacs.

26.) Suleiman IIRuled: 1687-1691

27.) Ahmed IIRuled: 1691-1695

28.) Mustafa IIRuled: 1695-1703

-removed from the throne after the "Edirne Event," another Janissary-led coup.

30.) Ahmed IIIRuled: 1703-1730

-yet again, removed from office by a Janissary coup d'état.

31.) Mahmud IRuled: 1730-1754

32.) Osman IIIRuled: 1754-1757

33.) Mustafa IIIRuled: 1757-1774

34.) Abdulhamid IRuled: 1774-1789

35.) Selim IIIRuled: 1789-1807

-deposed in a Janissary coup, killed on Mustafa IV's orders.

36.) Mustafa IVRuled: 1807-1808

-ousted and executed in an uprising led by Minster/Pasha Aledmar.

-murdered on the orders of Mahmud II.

37.) Mahmud IIRuled: 1808-1839

-finally disbanded the Janissary army corps by force, subterfuge, and extra-judicial executions.

38.) Abdulmecid IRuled: 1839-1861

-launched the “Tanzimat” era of political reform attempts.

39.) Abdul-Aziz IRuled: 1861-1876

-overthrown in a coup organized by his Council of Ministers.

-found dead 5 days later in a suicide or murder, unknown which occurred.

40.) Mehmed Murad VRuled: 1876

-honest attempts at democratic reforms by this Sultan led to another coup d’état organized by the Council of Ministers.

41.) Abdulhamid IIRuled: 1876-1909

-allowed formation of a constitution in 1876.

-suspended the constitution in 1878 in favour of traditional personal rule.

-forced by the army to restore constitutional provisions in 1908, deposed in 1909.

42.) Mehmed VIn Office: 1909-1918

- merely a figurehead, all real power held by the Council of Ministers who would circumvent the constitution at will.

-council foolishly led the empire into an alliance with Germany and Austria-Hungary during World War One.

- Ottomans fought on the losing side during World War One.

43.) Mehmed VIIn Office: 1918-1922

-Sultanate abolished following the “Young Turk” revolution of army officers led by Mustafa Kamal.

-died in exile in Italy in 1926.

44.) Abdulmecid IIIn Office: 1922-1924

-elected Sunni Islamic Caliph.

-Caliphate quickly abolished, died in exile in Paris, 1944.

The earliest records of Turkic peoples describe them as nomadic tribes on the plains of the Far East, north of the Great Wall of China, which was erected as both a fortification and border between the Han dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE) in China and the Xiongnu of the Mongolian plains. The ancestral people to the Turks are thought to have included the Xiongnu, who lived along the upper Yenisei River in Siberia. The first reference to "Turks" appears in Chinese sources of the 6th century. Much of Turkic early history is shrouded in legend and myth with little documentation.

To try classifying Turks into a specific race or ethnic identity is akin to catching a greased hog. Being a nomadic people, they encountered many other ethnic groups which were incorporated into the gene pool. The Turkic peoples of Europe tend to have European features, with the exception of some Crimean Tatars of Ukraine, who look European and

Northeast Asian. In turn, Turks in the Middle East resemble the peoples of the Middle East, while those in Central Asia look mixed but have mostly northeast Asian features. These biological conundrums give credence to the idea that racial evolution among Turks occurred earlier than thought. In fact, the Turkic languages may have evolved among populations that were already thoroughly entwined. Turkic peoples are classified via their language family, since their ethnic make-up is so diverse. We call their language family Turkic. It is one of humanity's largest lingual groups and possesses six branches with some 35 discrete languages within it. Turkic languages slowly travelled westward due to the nomadic behaviours of various tribes, migrating traders, and soldiers, eventually coming to outnumber and assimilate non-Turkic peoples along the way, and being partly replaced by other language families that have become prominent in the east such as Mongolic languages on the Mongolian steppes, Indic languages in India, and Persian (Farsi) in Iran. The term Turk itself is a derivation of the Chinese name "Tu-Jue." The earliest evidence of Turkic languages as a separate group comes from the early 8th century.

The exact date or even era of the initial expansion from their early homelands remains a puzzle. The first recorded state to use the word "Turk" in its name was that of the Göktürks in the 6th century. Later

Turkic states would use the word Turk often in the naming of their nations. With regards to the Göktürks, nearly 100 years later their power had grown to the point that they conquered the Rouruan and founded the Göktürk Empire.

The Turkic people, being made up of nomadic horsemen, tended to have diverse tribes and clans. Turkic tribes include the Karluks, Uyghurs, Kyrgyz, Oghuz, Huns, Mongols and Turkmens. Due to the simple fact that these tribes were creating states in the region between Mongolia and Transoxiana, they came into contact with Muslims. Over time most of these tribes and clans came to adopt Sunni Islam. It should be noted that there were also some other groups of Turks who were adherents to other faiths. The most common religions among this minority were Christians, Jews, Buddhists, and Zoroastrians.

The name "Turk" in the Islamic era became an identifying word that grouped Muslim Turkic tribes in together, as opposed to Turkic tribes that were not Muslims. Clear examples of this were the Tuvans, who were in fact Buddhists. Thus the usage of the word "Turk" for the Islamic Turkic tribes would come to serve the same function as the name "Tajik" did for the laundry list of Iranian tribes who converted to Islam and adopted Persian as their language. Both terms were employed to signify a tribe's adherence to Islam. In some respects it served to showcase a common tongue and culture. In part using these factors to embolden a sense of unity among the diverse Turkic tribes, the Atabeg Seljuk Turks created the first Turkish dynasty to rise to the level of empire. The Seljuq Turk Empire would encompass lands stretching from India to Anatolia.

Turks serving in Abbasid Caliph's army and government would come to be the rulers of most of the Middle East under Seljuq stewardship, save for Syria and North Africa. This patchwork of Turkic-ruled Muslim states would last until unification under the Ottomans. The Oghuz and other tribes captured and dominated various countries under the leadership of the Seljuq dynasty, and eventually captured the lands of the Abbasid Caliphate and the slowly decaying Byzantine Empire. To the east at the same time their cousins in the Middle East were having great success; the Kyrgyz and Uyghurs were fighting among one another and locked in fierce conflict with the Chinese Empire. Other Turkic tribes such as the Bulgars eventually would settle in Europe during the 7th to 8th centuries. In the case of the Bulgars however, they were assimilated by the Slavic people native to the area. Ultimately, the fusion of Turkic and Slavic gave Bulgaria her name and the Bulgars the Slavic language.

In the 11th century the Seljuq migrated from their ancestral homelands on the central Asian steppe into Iran. In attempting to settle there, they came up against the Ghaznavid Empire, which ruled Iran during that period. An estimated 40,000 clans of Oghuz Turks migrated to the area of modern day Azerbaijan in 1025 during one of the largest Turkish migrations on record. The Seljuq defeated the Ghaznavid at the Battle of Nasa Plains in 1035. Following years of war and after the brutal siege of Isfahan in 1050/51, they shaped an empire later called the Great Seljuq Empire. The Seljuq would then mix with the local population, adopting the Persian culture and language in the subsequent decades.

Under Seljuq sponsorship and aid, numerous Turk tribes would create Beyliks (vassal states) in the newly conquered regions. Most notably these vassals and fiefdoms to the Seljuq Turk Empire sprang up in Anatolia, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon.

Chapter Two

Foundation of Bones

Upon the Mongol victory over the Seljuq in 1293 and the subsequent seizure of that former empire, an ambitious Turk named Osman (Atman/Othman) emerged as Bey, or Prince, of a Turkish vassal state aligned with the Seljuq. A generation or so prior, Osman's tribe, the Kayi, had taken over Byzantine Bithynia in north-western Anatolia. His ambition, political savvy, faith, and military skills would change the world. His followers were called the Osmanili; we know them as the Ottomans.

Early stories passed down by the nomadic oral tradition perhaps give us some glimpse at how the Kayi tribe came to live in western Anatolia in the first place. It seems straightforward and plausible, with little of the fantastical and mythic storytelling too often found in the oral traditions. The short version says that Ertugrul, Osman I's father, led the Turkic Kayi tribe west from what is today Turkmenistan into Anatolia. They were fleeing the advancing Mongols who were now united and storming westward. Ertugrul is believed to have given an oath of fealty to Sultan Kayqubad I of the Seljuk principality of Rum, located in Anatolia. After the swearing of allegiance, Kayqubad gave the Kayi permission to establish a beylik and expand it at the expense of the neighbouring Byzantine provinces. Keep in mind that since the first crusade began in 1099, the Seljuk, and all other Muslim states regardless of Islamic sect, had been firmly locked in a generational conflict with Christian Europe. Crusade after bloody crusade, each time killing thousands and swinging the pendulum of Middle East power and territorial control back and forth, the Eastern Orthodox Christian Byzantines would frequently finance the Catholic Church's crusaders. While the Byzantines were wealthy, they were poor in manpower and had been in decline for decades as their territories dwindled. With Byzantine cash, the Pope could raise and fund crusader armies drawn from across Europe to "take back the holy land from the Muslim infidel." For the Seljuk living closest to the Byzantines, it was an imperative that the Byzantines be knocked out of the game to cut off crusader funds. To this end, it seems as though Kayqubad found willing swords in the Kayi tribe. Carving out a Kayi beylik in what had been Byzantine Bithynia, roots were now established in Anatolia.

Islamic armies and governments across the region began to panic in the face of the coming Mongol invaders. The Seljuk Turks were no better in this regard, as they had very much become Persian by now and seemed to have forgotten the nomad's way of horse-borne warfare. Nomadic-style mounted war tactics had been incorporated by their distant Mongol cousins to great effect in crushing everyone in their path. The Seljuq were now distracted and terrified by the seemingly invincible Mongol horde. As is par for the course in any government, there was intense internal political conflict and petty rivalries which only served to weaken the Seljuq further and make them an easy target for the relentless Mongols. Because of this, the Mongols smashed through the Seljuk Persian territories, seeing the Seljuk and their forces as a speed bumps rather than any real opposition. Soon enough Baghdad had been sacked by Hulagu Khan in 1258; this was the same year Osman was born. Back in 1231, as the Kayi were also expanding their control, Ertugrul took the town of Thebasion from the Byzantines; the Kayi Turks renamed the town Sogut. Moreover, Sogut became the first capital of his territory and where Osman was born.

Spending his formative years and teens on horseback with his father on campaign, Osman became a skilled warrior and politician. Learning all the skill sets he would require in order to defend his people, spread his faith, and set him and his descendants on the path to conquest, Osman would soon become a man of destiny and a power player in the region. Legend says that he once had a prophetic dream in which a great tree sprouted from his navel and its branches spread out across Asia, Europe and North Africa. His religious council had interpreted this dream as a sign that he would found an empire that his descendants would expand across three continents. While it may seem odd for a Muslim to seek advice on dreams, it should be said that the form of Sunni Islam practiced by many nomadic Turkic tribes was Sufism.

Followers of Sufism seek to find direct encounters with Allah (god). They do not require Mosques to worship nor Imams to guide that worship. Prayer and sermons can literally be done anywhere. This feature was appealing to Turks who lived a life on horseback. Sufism arose within Islam in the 8th to 9th centuries CE as an ascetic movement. Sufis have traditionally taken vows of sexual abstinence and poverty, both of which Ottoman rulers would totally disregard. Sufism evolved rituals based on self-control in the hope that it would enable both psychological and mystical insights as well as a loss of self; the goal was union with God. These rituals and traditions include writing and reciting poetry and religious hymns; some of the most

famous and beautiful literature of the Islamic world has been written by Sufis. A famed order of Sufi is the so-called "Whirling Dervishes," a Turkish sect that practices meditation and contemplation of God through dance-like spinning, similar to what small children often do when trying to attain a temporary euphoria or a natural high. The Whirling Dervishes believe this euphoric state, induced by the spinning, allows them to receive Allah's love and insights. While Osman was in no way a strict adherent of Sufism, he did have a strong connection and belief in Sunni Islam. He intended to use Allah's gifts to create an empire - the empire his dream suggested.

Around 1280, Osman's father passed away. At the same time there was a massive influx of refugees into Anatolia. The Mongol push west had caused millions of people to flee into the Turkish Emirates within Anatolia. In addition to this refugee migration, Muslim warriors and mercenaries from across the Middle East were flooding into Anatolia, not only to fight the Mongols but to take the fight to the Byzantines in the hope of delivering a death blow to that crumbling kingdom. The Turkic population of Osman's Emirate was constantly bolstered by the deluge of refugees fleeing from the Mongols. Ghazi warriors, those who believed it their sacred duty as Muslims to go to war and defend Islamic lands and peoples, were very often among the numbers of refugees and mercenaries. With these warriors under his command, Osman proved in short order to be an effective and feared military leader.

Osman had the good sense to not take on those around him that were too powerful to contend with at the time. Fight the battles you know you can win was his strategy. Instead of taking on his more powerful Turkic cousins in Anatolia and avoiding being utterly devastated by picking a fight with the Mongols, Osman turned his gaze west. The Byzantines would be his target. The decision was not only strategically sound, but it made sense economically as well since the Byzantines were affluent beyond measure. If Osman could peck away at what little territory remained under Byzantine control, he could also loot and pillage his way to wealth that would be used to finance future campaigns against other Turks and Mongols. His first military actions were to secure the passes which led from the barren areas of northern Phrygia near modern Eskisehir into the bread basket of Bithynia.

Osman's first conquests of note came on the heels of the collapse of the Seljuk when their empire was crushed beneath the hoofs of Mongol horses. Osman was quickly able to occupy the fortresses of Eskisehir and Karacahisar. Soon thereafter he captured the first major city, Yenisehir, which was taken with brutal efficiency. Upon Osman's

forces occupying the city it was made the Ottoman's first capital in 1302. Osman and his followers were now being referred to as the Osmanli. In the west it would become the word Ottoman, a term synonymous with conquest and Islam. Moving swiftly west, the Ottomans routed a Byzantine force near Nicaea. Osman began placing his forces closer to Byzantine-controlled areas. He was using Anatolia as real life chessboard, setting up his army for a "checkmate" over the Byzantines. The addition of Ghazi warriors and adventurers of differing backgrounds into Ottoman territory emboldened Ottoman rulers to self-style themselves as "Sultan of Ghazis," which roughly translates as "Rulers of the defenders of Islam." All Sultans used the title Ghazi along with the Sultan moniker in order to highlight their martial commitment to Sunni Islam.

As the Ottomans began to expand and surround the Byzantines, the latter began an exodus from the Anatolia. The Byzantine generals and leadership were desperate to thwart and block Ottoman expansion. To their detriment, Byzantine commanders and leadership were mostly inept, outgunned, and generally speaking, completely out of their depth. Ineffectual organization, combined with apathy among the imperial court, contributed to their eventual defeat. While the Byzantines spent the following years being terrified and incompetent, Osman spent the remainder of his life expanding his control. By 1308 he had achieved all his short term military goals and his forces were in place on the chessboard of Anatolia. He was ready to put the nail in the Byzantine coffin. In same year, his forces took control of Ephesus near the Aegean Sea. This was a major strategic coup and a psychological blow to the Byzantine populace huddled behind their walls in Constantinople. Ephesus was the very last Byzantine city on the coast of Anatolia. In effect, all their territory in Anatolia was now under Ottoman domination. With one last campaign, Osman's army under Orhan's command captured the city of Bursa, another brilliant gain for the Ottomans. From the military headquarters in Bursa, the Ottomans were in the perfect position to begin the long process of taking the most impregnable city on earth - the Byzantine imperial capital of Constantinople.

Osman died in 1326, after having laid the foundation for an empire that would last until 1922. Future Sultans were given the title "the Sword of Osman" when they took the throne. This signified their role as a Ghazi first and foremost, and their attachment to the patriarch of the dynasty. Osman's son, Orhan, took power after his father, and was given a very important bit of advice from Osman:

"Son, be careful about the religious issues before all other duties! The

religious precepts build a strong state. Do not give religious duties to careless, faithless and sinful men or to dissipated, indifferent or inexperienced people. And also do not leave the state administrations to such people. Because the one with fear of God, the Creator, has no fear of the created. One who commits a great sin and continues to sin cannot be loyal. Scholars, virtuous men, artists and literary men are the power of the state structure. Treat them with kindness and honour. Build close relationship when you hear about a virtuous man and give wealth and grant him...Put order the political and religious duties. Take lesson from me so I came to these places as a weak leader and I reached to the help of God although I did not deserve. You follow my way and protect Din-i-Muhammadi and the believers and also your followers. Respect the right of God and his servants. Do not hesitate to advise your successors in this way. Depend on God's help in the esteem of justice and fairness, to remove the cruelty, attempts in every duty. Protect your public

from enemy's invasion and from cruelty. Do not treat any person in an unsuitable way with unfairness. Gratify the public and save all for their sake" (Osman I, 1326, last testament).

Chapter Three

War Machine

The founding patriarch of the Ottomans was now dead and gone, his armies in place and ready to strike like a coiled snake at the Byzantines. Orhan, the son of Osman, was now Ghazi Sultan. An accomplished field commander in his own right, Orhan and his heirs would continue to spread the branches of Osman's dream tree. In the 1300s and 1400s the Ottomans would conquer an area to rival the Romans at their zenith. The use of cannons, Special Forces, Islam, and economics to terrific outcomes were the hallmark of Ottoman power and became the national brand. It was in this period that the mere utterance of the word "Ottoman" or "Turks" sent Europeans to the privy to clean out their britches.

Bursa was captured and made the Ottoman capital in 1324, 2 years prior to Osman's death. While he was unable to lead the campaign, his heir Orhan commanded the troops. The capture of Bursa sent the Byzantines reeling. This put the Ottomans with the tactical and strategic advantage. In the following years, Nicaea (modern İznik) fell in 1331, and Nicomedia fell under the Ottoman sword in 1337.

Now having the troop numbers, population, and currency to expand across Anatolia, Orhan turned his attention to the neighbouring Turkmen states. Orhan annexed the principality of Karasi which had been weakened by dynastic struggles, and he extended his control to the extreme northwest corner of Anatolia. In 1346 the Ottomans became the primary ally and protector of the future Byzantine emperor John VI Cantacuzenus by moving a massive force across the Black Sea into the Balkans. The Ottomans made an agreement to assist him against his rival John V Palaeologus in exchange for access to Europe via the Balkans. John VI was willing to give away large tracks of Byzantine and Christian lands to the Ottoman for their military support and his throne being assured. He was clueless as to Ottoman designs on Europe and his tottering empire, and he was delusional and arrogant enough to think he could trust and control the Ottomans. Needless to say he was not very popular among the Byzantine leadership, nor were the Pope, the Hungarians, or the Romanians amused by his policy. While this may shock many that the Ottomans would align with someone they wanted to conquer, in reality it was brilliant.

As John VI's ally, Orhan married Theodora, John's daughter, and acquired the right to conduct raids in the Balkans. His campaigns provided the Ottomans with an intimate knowledge of the area, and in 1354 they seized Gallipoli with what can only be described as a commando raid. They now had a permanent toehold in Europe. Orhan's Sultanate also signalled the beginning of the institutions that evolved the Ottoman principality into a powerful state. In 1327 the first silver Ottoman coins were minted in Orhan's name, while the Anatolian conquests were consolidated and the military was reorganized on a more permanent basis to create a standing army of professional soldiers. He invested in social services, schools, Mosques, and infrastructure. Orhan and his successors had a clear understanding that the shovel and book were just as important as the sword in building an empire.

In the years after Osman and Orhan's initial conquests, the Ottomans began picking off Emirates, Principalities, and tin pot kingdoms left, right and centre. The city of Thessaloniki was captured from the Venetians in 1387; in 1389 the Serbs were brought under Ottoman control at the Battle of Kosovo. Then at the Battle of Nicopolis in 1396, regarded as the last Christian crusade of the Middle Ages, the Christian armies were utterly smashed by the Ottoman Turks. At this point, the Byzantines were confined to Constantinople. All their lands were under Ottoman dominion now. They were in effect surrounded. Fortune however would briefly smile on the Byzantines with a stay of execution.

A Turkic-Mongol war lord, Timur (Tamerlane), founder of the Timurid Empire, invaded Anatolia from his homeland in modern say Uzbekistan. He swept south through Iran and moved west into Anatolia. Timur advanced as far north as Tbilisi in the Caucasus Mountains. At the Battle of Ankara in 1402, Timur defeated the Ottoman forces and took Sultan Bayezid I as a prisoner; this threw the Ottoman Empire into complete chaos. Following Timur's retreat from the region, a civil war over succession among the Ottomans began. The civil war lasted from 1402 to 1413 as Bayezid's sons fought over which one would be Sultan. It ended when Mehmed I clawed and murdered his way into being the Sultan and restored Ottoman power, bringing an end to period of Ottoman history known as the Fetret Devri. Thereafter, fratricide would be common among competing brothers for the Sultan's throne; blinding and exile were employed as well, with the former extremely common as it did not kill one's brother precluded them from the throne due to his handicap.

Several Ottoman territories in Europe, particularly in the Balkans, had

been lost during the civil war. Sultan Murad II managed to re-conquer these lost territories in a 20 year campaign that spanned the 1430s and 1440s. At the Battle of Varna on 10 November 1444, the Ottomans under Sultan Murad II defeated a coalition Christian army of Hungarians,

Poles and Wallachians (Romanians). The Hungarians and Wallachians tried one more time to rout the Turks four years later, but again were defeated by the Ottomans at the Second Battle of Kosovo in 1448. Mehmed the Conqueror rose to power and set about reorganizing the state and the army. He streamlined all facets of the Ottoman government and instituted an

effective bureaucracy. In the areas of the Ottoman Empire where the Christian Orthodox church held religious sway, he allowed the church to retain its property, right to worship, and autonomy in exchange for their loyalty and acceptance of the authority of the Ottoman state.

Owing to tense relations and ineffective diplomacy among the states of Western Europe and the Byzantine Empire, the majority of the Orthodox citizenry willingly accepted Ottoman rule as it was preferable to Italian Catholic or even Byzantine rule, both of whom levied heavy taxes. The Byzantines had become inept and apathetic rulers. It should be highlighted that, during the Ottoman consolidation of lands in Europe, the Albanian resistance was a major thorn in the Ottoman's side. They put up a fierce fight to keep the Ottomans out of Albania, and denied the Turks a launching pad into Italy. They were eventually overcome, but their resistance was respected and legendary among the Ottomans troops. Despite eventually seizing Albania and having the ports needed to launch an invasion of Italy, such an invasion never came. Once again, the Ottomans were hesitant to capitalize on a key victory; they never took more than a handful of Italian islands in the Adriatic Sea. The Ottomans did manage to wrest control of all Italian trade cities in Anatolia, the Black Sea coast, and the Middle East. This delivered a severe economic blow to the Italian city states like Genoa, Venice, Naples and the Papal States controlled by the Catholic Church.

With all the pieces in place and once Ottoman territories in Anatolia and the Balkans had been secured, they made "checkmate" move on Constantinople. The siege, led by Mehmed II and begun on 29 May 1453, lasted a total of 53 days. The 21 year old Sultan had the military acumen of a seasoned commander. He was the first person in history to employ large cannon artillery. He used these massive, Hungarian-built cannons with jaw dropping results. The walls of

Constantinople, once thought to have made the city invincible, crumbled before the onslaught of the Ottoman guns. The loss of Constantinople to the Muslim Ottomans was a massive psychological blow to all in Christendom. Mehmed II immediately made the city the new Ottoman capital and changed its name to Istanbul, meaning “City of Islam”. In addition he converted the great Hagia Sophia Church into the greatest Mosque in the Muslim world. The Byzantine Empire was now dead. Muslims ruled a once great Christian empire. Balkan Europe was now part of the Ottoman hegemony. The Ottoman navy ruled the seas, and its army seemed unstoppable. Europe quaked in fear of what the Ottomans would do next.

The twilight of Mehmed II’s rule and that of his immediate successors was devoted to a series of military campaigns designed to expand the Ottoman frontiers in Europe and Asia. Serbia, Bosnia, and Greece were all made Ottoman Provinces. In Asia, Amasra, a key port for the trade empire for the Italian Genoese city-state, was seized. The Ottomans also took Sinop from a Muslim Emir, another key port city on the Black Sea. Trebizond was taken from its self-styled Greek emperor. With Trebizond holding territory in Crimea as well as in northeastern Anatolia, this made the Ottomans the lords of the Black Sea; they now controlled all the shipping lanes and trade routes from Asia into Europe. Continuing their conquests and keeping their eyes open for opportunities, the Ottomans could not resist conspiring to take Muslim lands not under their control. Important changes were occurring in these Muslim territories. Prime examples are the

Mamluk Turks who had ruled Egypt and Syria and had been on their last leg since about the mid-13th century. The final blows to these independent Muslim states first came from the Portuguese who had opened up direct sea lanes to India, circumventing the need to pass through the Egyptian Sultanate. The economic impact of this was devastating. The death blow came at the hands of the Ottomans, who had been planning to take Egypt and expand into North Africa for many years. The Mamluk weakness gave them an opening, one that the Ottomans seized between 1485 and 1490 as the Ottomans and the Mamluk Turks of Egypt fought a war to a stalemate. Despite being economically stagnant, the Mamluk were still an impressive military force to reckon with.

Before the Ottoman could finish off the Mamluk, another Muslim threat rose in Iran. The Shi’a branch of Islam was radicalizing the people and gave rise to a new Iranian Kingdom, one bent on the conquering the Turks. The Safavid, characterized as aggressive religious zealouts, were now in power in Iran. After years of

inconclusive warfare, on 23 August 1514 the Ottoman Turks finally defeated the Safavid Iranians. Inexplicably, the Sultan Selim did not take full advantage on this victory. The Safavid were on their knees, the Shi'a sect was running scared, and Selim's forces crushed the Safavid armies - yet he withdrew back to Ottoman lands. He left the Safavid Shah still in power to lead a defeated, broken, and weakened empire. However, they would remain a problem for the Ottomans for generations to come.

In a short, brutal war the Ottomans finally toppled the Mamluk in Egypt. During the 1500s, solid and highly effective Sultans such as Suleiman the Magnificent conquered all of North Africa through to Morocco. This gave the Ottomans port access to the Atlantic. Soon Syria, Palestine, and Western Arabia fell to the Ottoman war machine. The Ottomans now controlled the three holiest cities to the three major Abrahamic faiths. Jerusalem, Mecca, and Medina were all Ottoman possessions now. Additional historical and symbolic cities like Cairo, Damascus, Constantinople (Istanbul), Athens, and many others would all be Ottoman prizes. The cradle of civilization was their backyard. The Mediterranean was an Ottoman playground. They had advanced deeper into Europe, taking more land in the Balkans and central Europe, and marched its armies all the way to the gates of Vienna, Austria. While the Ottoman attempts to take Vienna failed, the very fact that they were even there in force spoke volumes. This was the apex of Ottoman power and hegemony. The period between 1500 and the late 1600s were a golden age for the Ottoman Turks. But history, destiny, and fortune are all untrustworthy lovers to embrace. Their status as a super power would not last. In time, all empires fall; the Ottoman Empire would be no different.

Chapter Four

Coup d'états, Corruption, Janissaries, and Decline

Even though the Ottoman Empire had a life span of more than 600 years, much longer than the 300-year average, she began a slow decline in the late 1600s. Much like watching a building collapse in slow motion, the decline of the empire started with a few seemingly minor naval defeats at the hands of the rising Portuguese and Spanish empires in the 1500s, then evolved into a virus with a long incubation period – one that was about to infect the entire system of the Ottoman Empire.

Most expert historians on the era and the Ottomans agree that the empire's stagnation began in the 1560s. With an empire as vast and wealthy as the Ottomans, it was inevitable that the opulence, harems, palaces, and poor leadership in general would lead to inept Sultans, advisors, and commanders being in charge at multiple points in time. While there were good leaders in the decline period, they were too few; the incompetent rulers slowly eroded away Ottoman power like waves wearing down a beach.

It is often said the first dozen Sultans or so were capable leaders, as they were competent, intelligent, wise, and adaptable. In comparison the following Sultans until about 1700 were, with but two exceptions, complete failures as leaders, either incompetent or apathetic in exercising their will upon the state. The dynamic and effective military and bureaucratic systems of the previous century became stagnant under an era of rule by weak Sultans. The Ottomans began to fall to the back of the class in military technology. Growing religious and intellectual conservatism killed innovation in the empire and gave the Europeans an upper hand. In spite of this trend toward religious dogma and the touting of willful ignorance in lieu of stricter Islamic policies, the Empire remained a major expansionist power until the Battle of Vienna in 1683, which marked the end of Ottoman expansion into Europe.

The Portuguese discovery of the Cape of Good Hope at the southern tip of Africa in 1488 later caused several Ottoman-Portuguese naval wars in the Indian Ocean throughout the 16th century. The Ajuran

Empire, in what is today southern Somalia, allied itself with fellow Muslim Ottomans, and rejected the Portuguese monopoly in the Indian Ocean by employing a new coinage which followed the Ottoman pattern. The Ajuran were thus asserting their economic independence in regard to the Portuguese.

The Russian threat arose in the late 1500s. Until the Ottoman collapse, Russian and Ottoman conflicts would become the stuff of story and legend. There was a clear, visceral hatred between the two societies, mostly due to their mutual expansionism and living too close to each other. Under Czar Ivan IV, Russia expanded into the Caspian region at the expense of the Tatar Muslim Khanates. In 1571, the Crimean Khan Devlet I, supported by the Ottomans, burned Moscow nearly to the ground. The Crimean Khanate continued to invade Eastern Europe in a series of slave raids, and remained a significant power in Eastern Europe until the end of the 17th century, but it was only able to attack the Russians successfully with Ottoman support. The Russians, as one would expect, were not going to forgive or forget the Ottoman support of the Crimean Muslims. In addition, to say that the Ottoman-Russian conflicts were fuelled in part by religious fervour on both sides would be an understatement.

The Russians, being Eastern Orthodox Christians, saw themselves as the inheritors of the Byzantine Empire, which the Ottoman Muslims just happened to have destroyed. For many in the Czar's court, government, and army, it was a multi-generational goal to avenge the Byzantines by crushing the Ottomans.

Spain would go on to win a victory over the Ottoman fleet at the Battle of Lepanto in 1571. It was a shocking blow to the image of Ottoman invincibility, an image already tarnished when the Knights of Malta repelled Ottoman invaders in 1565. Following the Spanish victory on the high seas, the Ottoman navy did regain much of its former power in short order, even forcing Venice to sign a peace treaty in 1573.

In the late 1500s into the early 1600s, after a massive mutual military build up on the central European frontier with the Hapsburgs, the powder keg along the borders began to simmer down. In effect, a stalemate and status quo had set in between the Ottoman and Hapsburg, largely as a result of the Habsburgs shoring up their defences and military innovations the Ottomans were neglecting to learn and implement. The Ottoman Empire managed to stay powerful, despite a decaying army and weakened economic position. During the 17th century she did not have any major military defeats or rebellions,

nor did the Sultans embark on any foolhardy military adventures. There were two exceptions to this era of Ottoman peace. The Safavid dynasty of Iran, the one they should have finished off long ago, was becoming a problem once again. Significant numbers of the Ottoman Empire's eastern provinces were lost, most for good. The 1603–1618 war with the Iranian Safavid resulted in the Treaty of Nasuh Pasha. The concessions made by the Ottomans were humiliating and damaging. The terms granted the seccession of the entire Caucasus from the Ottoman Empire, save for western Georgia. These Caucasus lands were given back to the Iranian Safavid.

Then came the brief reign of Sultan Murad IV, wherein the Turks reasserted central authority and recaptured Iraq in 1639 from the Safavid. Within the harems and chambers of political power, the so called "Sultanate of women" rose to great influence. It was a period in which the mothers of young Sultans exercised power on behalf of their sons, often acting as Queen Regents or Lord Protectors during a chosen heir's minority. This period lasted only from about the mid-1640s until the mid-1650s. After the Sultanate of women had been curbed, another ambitious group tried to make their mark. Effective control of the Empire was in the hands of series of Grand Viziers from the Köprülü family for approximately 50 years until 1703. The Köprülü Vizierate did see renewed military success, albeit on a smaller, less awe-inspiring scale than the huge land grabs of the past. They took back Transylvania, seized Crete in 1669, and held Ukraine in 1676 after a successful a minor expansion into Polish-controlled territory.

In May of 1683 the Grand Vizier, Kara Mustafa Pasha, led a huge army in an attempted second Ottoman siege of Vienna during the Great Turkish War of 1683–1687. This would mark the abrupt end of the era of Ottoman assertive aggression. Ottoman forces were wiped away like ants on a counter top. A Christian alliance of Habsburg Austrian,

German, and Polish forces won the day. Once again, humiliating terms were imposed, and once again the Ottomans were bleeding off territory to their enemies.

After another Austro-Turkish War from 1716–1718 in which the Ottomans were soundly trounced, Serbia and parts of Romania were ceded to Austria. The war also exposed Ottoman Empire as a state was on her heels and unlikely to present any further aggression in Europe. The Austro-Russian–Turkish War, which was ended by the Treaty of Belgrade in 1739, resulted in the recovery of Serbia by the Ottomans,

but the Empire lost the port of Azov to the Russians. After this treaty, the Ottoman Empire was able to enjoy a generation of peace, as Austria and Russia were forced to deal with the rise of Prussia and a highly militarized and aggressive German state.

During the years of relative peace and stability, the Ottomans began making educational and technological reforms. They recognized to some extent the superiority of the Europeans in technical fields, resulting in their military superiority. The Ottomans for a brief time wanted to reclaim the mantle of military superpower. To achieve this, the education system had to be redrawn, including the establishment of proper universities not focused on Islam. In 1734 an artillery school was established to teach Western-style artillery methods, but the Islamic clergy successfully objected, thus weakening the Ottoman military even further. In 1754 the artillery school was reopened on a semi-covert basis. In 1726, Ibrahim Muteferrika convinced the Grand Vizier Damat İbrahim Pasha, the Grand Mufti of the Sunni Islamic branch, on the imperative need of something as simple and necessary as a printing press. As with any hyper-religious society or theocratic state, knowledge from outside the religion or clerical control was seen as a threat to their dominance of the mind and spirit of that culture. The printing press would free the minds of those living in the Ottoman Empire, as it did in Europe.

Yet another Russo-Turkish War, this one occurring from 1768–1774, ended with Ottoman social concessions to the victorious Russians. The peace treaty provided freedom to worship for the Christian citizens of the Ottoman controlled provinces of Wallachia and Moldavia. By the late 18th century, a number of defeats in several wars with Russia led some political and social scholars in the Ottoman Empire to correctly surmise that the reforms of Peter the Great had given the Russians an edge, and the Ottomans would have to keep up with Western technology in order to avoid further defeats.

With need to reform and modernize all areas of Ottoman society, Selim III in the first decade of the 1800s made serious attempts to modernize the army. However, these reforms were stifled and obstructed by the religious leadership and the Janissary corps in the army. Desperate to retain their class privileges and status, the Janissary corps would cause rebellions at the mere rumour of army reforms. Selim's efforts cost him his throne and his life, but were resolved in permanent and bloody fashion by his successor, the dynamic Mahmud II, who eliminated the Janissary corps in 1826. After centuries of the Janissaries being the crack stormtroopers and Special Forces of the Ottoman state, they were now a threat to it. Over

the last two hundred years or more, they had been behind dozens of revolts, coup d'états, and plots to oust Sultans. Mahmud II had them rounded up by the regular army, police, and secret police and either put to death or imprisoned for life.

The Serbian Revolution of 1804–1815 marked a paradigm shift to an era of nationalism and ethnic liberation in the Balkans. The 19th century was not a pleasant one for the Ottomans. In 1821, the Greeks declared war on the Sultan. A rebellion that originated in Moldavia as a diversion, the primary uprising was in the Peloponnese of Greece. By 1829 the northern part of the Gulf of Corinth became the first parts of the empire to achieve independence from the Ottoman yoke via ethnic/nationalist revolutions. By the mid-19th century, the Ottoman Empire was called "the sick man of Europe." The Ottoman states of Wallachia, Moldavia, and Montenegro all armed themselves and organized to make the move for independence during the 1860s and 1870s. The train of collapse was barrelling toward the Sultan, gaining speed and force. The next 40 years would be the death throes of a once great empire.

Chapter Five

Betting on the Wrong Horse

The defeat and dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire began with a Second Constitutional Era, established by the "Young Turk" Revolution. It restored the Ottoman constitution of 1876 and brought into play for the first time multi-party politics with a two-phase system under the control and guidance of an Ottoman parliament. It attempted to guarantee liberties and engaged to dissolve communal tensions to make the empire into a more harmonious place with less ethnic and religious rivalries.

It did not turn out that way. This period became the story of the twilight struggle of the Empire. Young Turk movements created their partisan affiliations, while ethnic parties like Al-Fatat and the Armenian national movement organized under Armenian Revolutionary Federation began to make their voices heard.

Ottoman military reforms resulted in a modernized Ottoman army. This new army then set about to prove its mettle in two pointless but short wars, the Italo-Turkish War of 1911 and the Balkan Wars of 1912–1913.

With the empire being on the verge of revolution, and highly unstable, the choice to enter the war on the side of what had been their historic enemies, the Austro-Hungarians and the Germans, was nothing short of insane. The history of the Ottoman Empire during World War I began with the empire's engagement in the Middle Eastern theatre. There were several key Ottoman victories in the early years of the war, such as the Battle of Gallipoli where they routed and destroyed a British ANZAC (Australia-New Zealand Army Corps) invasion force. Later though, the Arab Revolt which began in 1916 turned the tide against the Ottomans in the Middle Eastern front.

Ottoman logic behind entering the war had several elements to it. First they assumed, as many did, that the Germans were going to win. In siding with them, they felt that their honour and reputation could be restored following a century of humiliating losses at the hand of the Russians most frequently. Secondly, and in truth the most important reason, was that the Ottomans sought to reconstitute at least part of their empire by taking Middle East territories back from

the Italians, British, and Russians, all of whom held lands once under Ottoman governance with Libya and Egypt being prime real estate. The Suez Canal in Egypt would restart the Ottoman economy if they could only seize it. In addition, the Austrians had given assurances that Aegean Sea Islands, Black Sea coastal areas like Crimea, the Caucasus region, and Greece would all be ceded back to the Ottomans. Ottoman blind lust for the Caucasus region for example fuelled a Turkish hatred for the stubborn and resistant Armenians. This nationalist fervour would lead to the first genocide of the 20th century.

The Ottoman government started first with the deportation of its Armenian population, resulting in the death of approximately 1.5 million Armenians in what became known as the “Armenian Genocide.” This ethnic cleansing was carried out during and after World War I and was implemented in two tiers: first, the wholesale killing of the able-bodied male population through massacres and forced labour, followed up by the deportation of women, children, the elderly, and the disabled. This most vulnerable group of Armenians we led on death marches into the Syrian desert, where they were left to die. Rape and other instances of systematic abuse and cruelty were common on the trek to Syria. The Turkish troops who escorted them saw the Armenians as little more than insects, less than human, deserving no compassion. Beside atrocities committed against the Armenians, mass murder was also perpetrated upon the empire's Greek and Assyrian minorities as part of the same campaign of ethnic cleansing.

Between war, genocide, and revolution, an Ottoman rebirth was not to be. The Fates, poor military performance, along with a British-sponsored Arab rebellion, an internal struggle within the Ottoman officer’s corps who sought a Republican government; all manifested a perfect storm which marked the end of the Ottoman state. The Armistice of Mudros, signed on 30 October 1918, set the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire under the terms of the Treaty of Sèvres. This treaty, as concocted in the conference of London, provided that the Sultan could retain his position and title. The Allied forces occupation of Constantinople and İzmir after the war led to the establishment of a Turkish nationalist

movement, which won the very brief Turkish War of Independence 1919–22, although it was in essence a civil war.

Under the leadership of a “Young Turk,” former Army officer Mustafa Kemal, the Sultanate was abolished on 1 November 1922, and the last

Sultan, Mehmed VI, reigned from 1918–22 before fleeing into exile in Italy of all places on 17 November 1922. The irony of the last Ottoman Muslim Sultan fleeing to Catholic Italy is worth a chuckle at the least. The Caliphate was then abolished on 3 March 1924, the Ottoman Empire replaced by a Republic, aptly named Turkey with a semi-liberal, secular form of Army-backed democracy was now in place. The Middle East, and the world, would never see an old world empire with such longevity again.

Conclusions

The fall of the Ottoman Empire, her loss in World War One and her conversion into a more democratic republic, were all earth shaking geo-political events. After losing all their territory, save for the homeland of Anatolia, now called Turkey, the Ottoman Empire's former Middle East holdings were seized and carved up by the victors. Little if any consideration to ethnic and religious divisions was manifested by the British and French when drawing up the new borders for the region. Entirely new nations were created, most of which had never existed even before the Ottomans. Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Oman, and several others only sprang into existence with the Ottoman defeat and the British/French victory. The British forged close alliances with Arab tribal leaders during their rebellion against the Turks, as a result, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Bahrain, and Qatar were born.

In North Africa, Egypt came under British rule. Libya was handed to Italy, Algeria and Tunisia became part of the French colonial empire, and Morocco came under Spanish dominion. Meanwhile, in the melting pot and ethnic tinder box of the Balkans, Serbs, Bosnian Muslims, Croats, Greeks, Macedonians, Albanians, Kosovars, and Gypsies were cobbled together as Yugoslavia. Later, in the 1990's Yugoslavia would derail and fall into a savage ethnic civil war.

The Ottomans had created an empire with diverse ethnic groups, dozens of languages, and several religions. They held it together for a time by instilling a national unity, tolerance for non-Muslims, and giving their subjects a stake in the prosperity of the Ottoman state. They used a playbook employed by many successful empires before them - a combination of religion, tolerance, inclusion, military might, and economic dominance which seemed to be the magic combination.

The Turks ruled what amounts to the last of the old world, old style empires. The chances of an imperial power in the vein of the Ottomans, Romans, Persians, or even the British is unlikely to ever occur again. It can be said the United States is an empire, a global one. This observation holds true on some levels, but it is not in the same class as that of the Ottomans and their predecessors. Today in the Middle East, after dictators have fallen like dominoes, the ethnic and religious tensions put on the back burner during the Ottoman hegemony are now on full display. In many ways, had the Ottomans not fallen and were able to survive and prosper into the 21st century,

the violence, chaos, and war seen in places like Iraq, Syria, Libya, and Yemen would never have been allowed to ignite under their rule. The conclusion we can draw is this; the Ottoman Sultans, good, bad, ugly, and magnificent can sit back and stare into the looking glass of history and say with a satisfied grin, “do you miss me yet?”

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